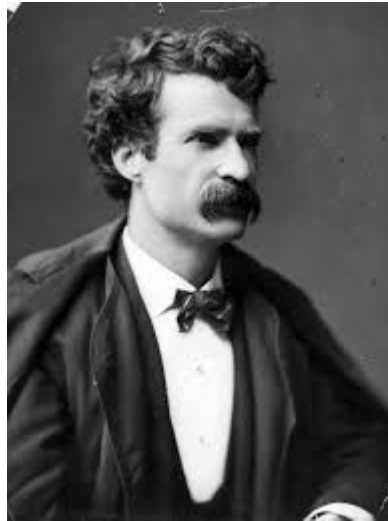


ANALYSIS BY CHAPTER

Huckleberry Finn (1884)



Mark Twain

(1835-1910)

INTRODUCTION

Huckleberry Finn is the best example of a novel that can be read for pleasure by a youngster and analyzed to pieces by a professor. Twain calls our attention to this at the outset with his “Explanatory” note to scholars on dialects and his “Notice” advising readers wanting entertainment they will be prosecuted, banished or shot if they attempt to analyze it. Go with the flow he says to folks, with Huck and the river. This is sound advice to any reader, especially intellectuals: first, read it once with receptive imagination and don’t let your head interfere.

A reader in the 19th century likely had read local color stories with dialect before, but never a whole book narrated by poor white trash. To the Victorians, books were supposed to be elevating--highbrow, not lowbrow. Huck offended “the best authorities,” as Tom Sawyer calls them. His book was banned from some libraries and schools for subverting morality and standard English. Also for denigration of respectability, bad company, petty thefts, nakedness, smoking, irreverence and lies. Louisa May Alcott, the genteel Victorian who wrote, in her own phrase, “moral pap for the young,” may have inspired Twain to counter with immoral Pap. Alcott scolded him: “If Mr. Clemens cannot think of something better to tell our pure-minded lads and lasses, he had better stop writing for them.” Twain replied that her attack on *Huckleberry Finn* would boost sales by 25,000 copies.

Chapter 1

Huck starts by affirming his primary value--the truth. He even judges Mark Twain on that score in *Tom Sawyer*, with tolerance for “stretchers” that Twain did not display in his satire of James Fenimore Cooper: “There was some things which he stretched, but mainly he told the truth. That is nothing. I never seen anybody but lied, one time or another, without it was Aunt Polly, or the widow, or maybe Mary...and the Widow Douglas.” Miss Watson doesn’t make the honor roll. Huck has already learned that at times lying is necessary for survival, especially around Pap. As he reviews the plot of *Tom Sawyer*, our attention is called to (1) the contrasting plots of the two books--Tom achieves success in society, whereas Huck runs away from it; and to (2) the contrasting prose styles:

The descriptions of daybreak...are an instance. In *Tom*, two squirrels (one in apologetic quotation marks) “skurry along...to inspect and chatter at the boys”; in *Huck*, “a couple of squirrels set on a limb and jabbered at me very friendly.” In *Tom*, “All Nature was awake and stirring, now”; in *Huck*, “I could see the sun out at one or two holes.” In *Tom*, “long lances of sunlight pierced down through the dense foliage far and near”; in *Huck*, “it was big trees all about, and gloomy in there,” and “there was freckled places on the ground where the light sifted down through the leaves.” (Walter Blair, *Mark Twain and Huck Finn*, 1960: 71-6)

The sweet and easygoing Huck ran away from the Widow Douglas, moved into a sugar barrel and “was free and satisfied.” Lonesome with no family, he does not say he was happy--just satisfied. His goals of freedom and satisfaction, or the pursuit of happiness, make him a representative American, while the disreputable life he leads implies that most Americans are betraying their essential heritage with false values such as materialism and status. Tom Sawyer says Huck can join his gang of robbers if he will go back to the Widow and “be respectable,” making Tom’s gang analogous to the immature adult society. Huck is tolerant of the widow calling him names and having to wait while she grumbles over the victuals “though there warn’t really anything the matter with them.” He is so egalitarian he integrates the foods on his plate because that way “things go better.”

The widow tries to teach him about “Moses and the Bullrushers,” introducing the theme of masking and disguises along the river. Huck is no Moses, but he does try to lead a slave out of bondage beyond Cairo. He “don’t take no stock in dead people” because he is living totally in the present. He recognizes that the widow is a hypocrite when he asks her if he can smoke and she tries to reform him: “And she took snuff too; of course that was all right, because she done it herself.”

Miss Watson is worse. She is a puritan, apparently a Calvinist, and is always telling him to sit up straight. “Then she told me all about the bad place, and I said I wished I was there.” Her heaven would be a bore to Huck and his heaven on the river would be hell to her. Twain said, “When I reflect upon the number of disagreeable people who I know have gone to a better world, I am moved to lead a different life” (“New Calendar of Pudd’nhead Wilson”). Huck says he wants to go to hell with Tom, whereas by the end of the book, after he has matured some, he would go to hell for Jim. St. Peters-burg is heaven for Tom, but not for Huck or Jim, whose “good place” is the raft. Later, Huck says “I felt so lonesome I most wished I was dead,” giving a sad undertone to his story and indicating why he is eager to join Tom’s gang. Twain wrote in his “New Calendar” that “the secret source of Humor itself is not joy but sorrow.”

2

Tom engages in his usual Tom-foolery. First he “wanted to tie Jim to the tree for fun; but I said no.” Huck is “in a sweat to get away,” but he waits, loyal to Tom here as he will be to Jim later, while Tom crawls like a snake to play a trick on Jim. Huck feels like everything is still and “lonesome,” alienated now in his heart even from Tom. The tricks Tom plays on Jim seem apparently harmless at the beginning of the book, but by the end, after Jim is humanized, they are felt by the reader to be cruel. This is proof of how *Huckleberry Finn* is able to change a white reader’s feelings about race relations. Jim is portrayed as a stereotype in the beginning because that is how he is seen by Huck, who is likewise uneducated and superstitious, though Jim knows more about folklore than the white boy. There is pathos in Jim’s imagining that witches rode him all over the State, making him “more looked up to than any nigger in that country,” as this is the only way he can feel important, but the white boys see this as uppity and Huck calls him “monstrous proud” and “stuck up.”

Tom assembles his gang in a little cave, recalling the big cave in *Tom Sawyer*. His values derive from romantic books—“the best authorities”—which neither he nor the other boys understand, especially as to the purpose of kidnapping people: “We’ll keep them till they’re ransomed to death--and a bothersome lot they’ll be, too, eating up everything and always trying to get loose.” As Tom explains his fantasy of killing people, he rejects all appeals to common sense and Twain conveys how popular culture ill prepares the

young for real life: “Kill the women? No--nobody ever saw anything in the books like that. You fetch them to the cave, and you’re always as polite as pie to them; and by-and-by they fall in love with you and never want to go home any more.” The absurd contradiction between popular culture and morality is highlighted when the boys decide that it would be wicked to rob and kill people on a Sunday.

3

Miss Watson “she took me in the closet and prayed, but nothing come of it.” Contrary to her claim that he should pray to receive “spiritual gifts,” he has been taught by example to see religion as largely a matter of rewards and punishments, a materialistic corruption of Christianity that makes a mockery of prayer: “Once I got a fishline, but no hooks.” He is shrewd enough to infer that Miss Watson wants him to sacrifice for others—“including Miss Watson, as I took it”—as a way of coercing him into doing whatever she wants. Consequently, he makes a pastoral retreat into Nature, the woods. Later, along the river, he finds hooks. The Widow, who once had a husband, offers him a more accommodating Providence than Miss Watson, who is a slave owner. Naturally he prefers the Widow’s Providence, though he does not expect salvation, “seeing I was so ignorant and so kind of low-down and ornery.” Ironically, in the course of his story, he proves himself to be the best white Christian in the book.

Huck soon resigns from Tom’s gang for the same reason he runs away from the Widow and Miss Watson--they do not represent the truth as he understands it by his experience. Tom’s leadership is based on his reading of romantic books, in particular Sir Walter Scott. In *Life on the Mississippi* (Chapter 46) Twain says, “Sir Walter had so large a hand in making Southern character as it existed before the [Civil] war that he is in great measure responsible for the war.” The authority Tom cites, ironically, is *Don Quixote*, identifying himself with the romantic and deluded Quixote, which casts Huck as the servant Sancho Panza, who has common sense. When Tom declares that genies are as big as a church and can build them a palace, Huck rebels as he did against the Providence of Miss Watson. He thinks the genies are “a pack of flatheads for not keeping the palace themselves.” He says if he was a genie, he would not come every time somebody rubbed an old tin lamp. But Tom, like Miss Watson the determinist, says he would have to come. Huck is disbelieving: “What, and I as high as a tree and as big as a church? All right, then; I *would* come; but I lay I’d make that man climb the highest tree there was in the country.”

After this comparison of a tree (Nature) with a church (society), Tom calls Huck a “perfect sap-head,” identifying his head with a tree. Once again, paralleling his withdrawal from Miss Watson, Huck retreats into the woods, where he rubs an old tin lamp “till I sweat like an Injun [Nature], calculating to build a palace and sell it; but it warn’t no use, none of the genies come. So then I judged that all that stuff was only just one of Tom Sawyer’s lies.... I think different. It had all the marks of a Sunday school.” Despite this disillusionment with Tom, his social conditioning is so strong, the power of popular illusions so great, and his desire for a family so compelling, Huck continues throughout the book to look up to Tom and even to defer to his judgment with respect to slavery. In this episode Twain also implies that Huck will get no help from either genies or Miss Watson’s God, that to be saved, both literally and spiritually, he will have to be self-reliant.

4

One day after a snowfall, Huck comes upon a boot print he recognizes as his Pap’s, with a cross in one heel “to keep off the devil”—ironic, since in his spiritual allegory Pap *is* the devil. To avoid lying to Pap, Huck gives away all the money he got in *Tom Sawyer*--over six thousand dollars--to Judge Thatcher, who saves it for him. Huck asks Jim to consult his hairball oracle and inquire what Pap is up to. Jim accepts a counterfeit quarter in payment because he can stick it into a potato overnight, “so anybody in town would take it in a minute, let alone a hairball.” Twain parallels the hairball with Tom’s genies and Miss Watson’s God, implying, to each his own illusions. Indirectly, he also satirizes Christians who believe that God is all-knowing, yet behave as if he can be fooled. Likewise, he ridicules belief in prophecies, which are usually so vague and equivocal that, given all eternity, any prophecy might eventually come true. Read in reverse, as irony, Jim’s interpretation foretells the plot of the book.

The first part of Jim’s reading is so true of almost every life it means nothing--trouble and joy, sickness and health. Then he says, “Dey’s two gals flyin’ ‘bout you in yo’ life. One uv ‘em’s light en ‘tother one is

dark. One is rich en 'tother is po'. You's gwyne to marry de po' one fust en de rich one by-en-by." A reader in the 19th century would recognize the Victorian convention of the Good Angel and the Bad Angel. The "gals" are Tom and Jim. The racist society would identify Tom as the Good (light) and the soon-to-be runaway slave as the Bad (dark). Tom is rich, Jim is poor. Read in reverse, however, according to Twain's allegory of Huck achieving moral salvation, Tom is spiritually poor, Jim spiritually rich. The metaphor of "marriage" (comparable to Ishmael "marrying" Queequeg in *Moby-Dick*) is ambiguous: At this point, Huck is wed to Tom, but on the river he bonds with Jim. In the end, we see that he has never been able to divorce himself from Tom. While faithful to Jim in his heart, he remains wed to Tom in his head. Finally, Jim warns Huck to avoid water, whereas the river proves to be a salvation for them both. He warns him to take no risks because the hairball predicts he is going to get lynched, whereas instead Huck takes great risks and saves himself by saving Jim.

5

The first description of Pap Finn emphasizes his whiteness: His face "was white; not like another man's white, but a white to make a body sick, a white to make a body's flesh crawl--a tree-toad white, a fish-belly white." Twain clearly wants to induce revulsion and disgust. As poor white trash Pap embodies the worst form of racism that has conditioned Huck to see Jim as subhuman, whereas Pap himself is the one who appears and acts subhuman--like a toad or a bottom fish. Unlike Miss Watson's genteel Christian racism as a slave owner, his racism is sadistically vicious. He is so obviously pure evil he suggests an opposite pure good, namely Jim. The two form a moral allegory that is also religious to Huck, who thinks he is going to hell. Evil and Good were introduced in the previous chapter: first Huck finds the track of Pap in the snow, gives away his money to save himself from Evil and turns to Jim.

At the same time, Twain the Realist depicts Jim as human, with common human motives--to make a little money, even if the coin is counterfeit, maybe telling a few "stretchers" through the medium of a hairball--displaying his humanity with gentle humor and the depth of pathos. As a humble (humiliated) slave, Jim has such limited avarice and prophetic or social power that he is deeply sympathetic and comic at once, doing the best he can in this world by placing his faith in a hairball.

Throughout the book, Twain frequently structures chapters in dualities such as Evil vs Good or Farce vs Pathos, which polarize thematic opposites. His Calvinist mind disposed him to moral allegory, almost as much as Hawthorne. In "The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg," the Man is clever as hell--a sophisticated Satan who corrupts everybody in town except the minister. In *Huck Finn*, Satan takes the primitive form of Pap--slang for racist trash talk. As Huck proves to us he has too good a heart to be corrupted, he becomes an unconscious minister to the reader.

Like Hemingway later, Twain is oversimplified by most people. Many people actually like these writers because they can read them with pleasure without feeling like they missed something--full and satisfied, instead of uncertain whether you will be able to digest the story. That is the *Huck Finn* principle: writing with a wide spectrum of appeal. At the risk of getting shot by the ghost of General U. S. Grant, I will hazard to note how Twain, making his narration musical, is able to blend tones, counterpoint themes, turn the ordinary into allegory, be simultaneously poignant and farcical, dramatize character as both completely realistic and reducible to an Idea and for his finale trump all tones with hilarious belly laughs at a fatuous Judge made a fool by that fraud Pap Finn. The end of this chapter is one of the funniest in Twain. Read it for the rhythms and listen to Pap:

And when it was bedtime, the old man rose up and held out his hand, and says: "Look at it gentlemen, and ladies all; take ahold of it; shake it. There's a hand that was the hand of a hog; but it ain't so no more; it's the hand of a man that's started in on a new life, and'll die before he'll go back. You mark them words--don't forget I said them. It's a clean hand now; shake it--don't be afeard." So they shook it, one after another, all around, and cried. The judge's wife she kissed it. Then the old man he signed a pledge--made his mark. [Twain likes to insert his own name at such moments.] The judge said it was the holiest time on record, or something like that.

Now to fully appreciate this farce you have to know that Twain's father, while presiding as a judge in Hannibal, as a good liberal, once tried to reform Jimmy Finn. This satire of gullible liberals implies that human nature, especially as represented here in its worst form, is basically irredeemable, a view close to the Calvinist doctrine of total depravity, at least with respect to some people. At the same time the moral project of the novel is liberal: to redeem white racist readers by identifying them with Huck, and through laughter and pathos and the humanizing of Jim, change their hearts. Humor is more effective than a sermon. The judge flips from rehabilitation to capital punishment for those who will or cannot be changed: "The judge he felt kind of sore. He said he reckoned a body could reform the ole man with a shot-gun, maybe, but he didn't know no other way."

6

Pap kidnaps Huck and takes him deep into the Wilderness and holds him prisoner—"and it warn't long after that till I was used to being where I was, and liked it, all but the cowhide part." He liked it. Huck adapts, he is natural, he is tolerant and he wants a family. Pap is all he's got. But then, in the primitive state of Nature, Pap starts beating him too much, abandons him and locks him in: "Once he locked me in and was gone three days. It was dreadful lonesome."

And it gets a lot more dreadful when Pap comes back, dirty from sleeping in the gutter and drunk: "A body would a thought he was Adam, he was just all mud." Twain implies that man has been full of Pap since Adam and is just as corrupt as mud. The devil in us speaks through Pap, from deep in the dark Wilderness of the human soul. His ugly racist speech is a masterpiece of bitter yet hilarious sustained irony. He spews hatred and bigotry until he is all mud with no claim now even to being white, a disgrace to his race with everybody laughing at his stupidity: "Pap was agoing on so, he never noticed where his old limber legs was taking him to, so he went head over heels over the tub of salt pork, and barked both shins, and the rest of his speech was the hottest kind of language." Character equals destiny. Like Faulkner later, Twain believes there is often a natural justice. He mocks the self-destructive folly of the ranting Pap, who only keeps hurting himself with his hatred and scapegoating rage.

His boozing does him no good either. In the throes of delirium tremens he hallucinates himself covered all over with snakes and getting dragged off to hell by ghosts, crying out, "Oh, let a poor devil alone!" Pap acts as the devil by trying to kill Huck with a knife, as Evil tries to destroy Good. Huck slips out of his jacket when Pap grabs the back of it, like sloughing off a skin, and says I "saved myself," affirming the psychology of individuation and the quest for salvation. What is at stake in the last image of the chapter is the survival of all that is embodied in Huck, the good heart. When finally Pap passes out, Huck stays awake, pointing a gun at him.

7

Huck eventually falls asleep and when he wakes up—"Pap was standing over me, looking sour--and sick, too." The wilderness personified in Pap is a threat to survival, especially if you have a heart. Huck has a gun but of course he does not use it. Instead he lies and prepares to kill himself. Twain sees the wilderness as a frontiersman, a pioneer, a steamboat pilot always watching out for hazards--a keen-eyed Realist with a Calvinist mind. He ridicules the Romantic view of Nature. He knew from experience what the wilderness is like, in contrast to Emerson and the New England Transcendentalists, snug in cozy little Concord, as if Walden Pond with no sharks was the world. Melville and Hemingway experienced the wilderness as both brutal and divine, whereas the Calvinist realism of Twain precluded pantheism. Perhaps it arrested his development as diagnosed by T. S. Eliot, or his individuation according to Carl Jung. But that ain't no matter. He gave us Huck Finn.

Also in this chapter, Twain contrasts literary styles as expressions of vision. Huck's escape from Pap by faking his own murder is simple, but not straightforward. He has to be devious--always masking and disguising himself--like Twain with his ironic style. Pap's style is stupidly blind-drunk primitive. Even though his own style works perfectly, Huck admires Tom's romantic style, because he would "throw in the fancy touches." Tom has already been identified with Don Quixote and Sir Walter Scott, and we might add James Fenimore Cooper. By nature and experience Huck is too realistic and shrewd to imitate Tom's style, too natural to try. But his taste has been conditioned by popular culture. Huck's plain style works, Tom's fancy style fails. In portraying Huck, Twain proves the superiority of both his vision and his style. Huck's

“murder” of himself is a metaphor: the spiritual death of his relation to Pap, a purging of the worst in his life. He dies to Pap and to conventional society on the land, floats across and is reborn on Jackson’s Island. This can also be seen as a metaphor of Twain’s feeling of rebirth from Tom into Huck.

Before floating over, when he wakes up and describes the moon over the river and the drift logs floating past, conveying even how it smelled without even specifying how it smelled, Huck again calls attention to his style: “You know what I mean--I don’t know the words to put it in.” Well it’s a good thing Mark Twain does. This is one of countless examples in the book of multiple ironies generated by Huck’s innocence, humility, independent spirit and social conditioning.

Lying on his back in a canoe, free and satisfied, now he can float: “The sky looks ever so deep when you lay down on your back in the moonshine; I never knowed it before. And how far a body can hear on the water such nights!” Huck is horizontal on the river of life, his perspective inverts up and down and the sky looks deep, synthesizing opposites--enlarging and intensifying his perspective. His transcendent consciousness is limited by adolescence and is also transitory and hazardous: floating blind on the river “in the moonshine.” Twain finds transcendence for himself in nostalgia for boyhood innocence, back when he felt most free and satisfied. Huck lands on the island on “the side towards the Illinois shore”--a free state. The name Jackson’s Island, in real life Glasscock’s Island, evokes Andrew Jackson, the President most associated with the Wilderness and the common people and hence with Democracy.

8

In the morning, when the river delivers him a loaf of bread, Huck attributes it to Providence, reminding the reader that to him, his soul is at stake and his prospects are doubtful. For several days he explores the island alone, getting lonesome and bored, until he discovers Jim, like Robinson Crusoe discovering Friday. He easily sides with Jim as a runaway slave because he himself is now on the run. According to his nature rather than to white society, he swears to keep his word and not to betray Jim, identifying honor with Indians: “Honest *injun* I will.” In *Tom Sawyer* Indian Joe was a villain.

Jim tells Huck he ran away because he overheard Miss Watson say she was going to sell him down the river for the money, breaking her word. Now both of them are running away from tyranny, in flight from exploitation for their value in dollars. Jim’s opportunities as a slave are so limited that his account of himself as a rich man are both comical and sad, humanizing him. “Wunst I had foteen dollars, but I tuck to specalat’n, en got busted out.” He invested in stock. Livestock. A cow. He got busted by con men but is too innocent and trusting to realize it.

Now that he is po’, Jim realizes in the end of the chapter that he is rich anyway: “I owns myself, en I’s wuth eight hundred dollars. I wisht I had de money, I wouldn’t want no mo’.” Slavery has conditioned him to see his value purely in monetary terms. Both he and Huck, the best characters in the book, have inferiority complexes. Both are humble. The chapter ends without an explanation of why Jim wants the money, because it has not yet occurred to Huck that Jim wants to be with his family as much as any white person does, that he hopes to buy his wife and children out of slavery without being captured and sold down the river. It probably does not occur to most readers either, unless, perhaps, they are black. Twain is carrying the “Method” of Henry James to an extreme: he is restricting point of view to an extremely limited consciousness that becomes increasingly aware, while granting the attentive reader greater perception than the protagonist, transcending his limitations.

9

Huck and Jim find a cavern on the island that contrasts with Tom’s cave in Chapter 2. It is located “right in the middle of the island”—“most up to the top of the side towards Illinois.” This inner space is centered, elevated and facing a free state: “Jim could stand up straight in it. It was cool in there.” The reader is encouraged to be romantic, to infer that Huck and Jim are going to move in here and live happily ever after as egalitarian American Adams.

Instead, Jim wants to bring their traps in here as part of his plan to hide if anyone invades their Eden. Twain repeatedly answers Romanticism with Realism. A slave cannot afford to be a romantic reader of the

world. Huck complies, and Jim replaces Tom as his Good Angel. The runaway slave has become parental, no longer so childlike nor a minstrel stereotype: "... 'f it hadn't a been for Jim. You'd a been down dah in de woods widout any dinner, en gittn' mos drowned, too, dat you would, honey. Chickens knows when its gwyne to rain, en so do de birds, chile."

Huck's description of the summer storm in common words is vividly evocative and poetic, his style idiomatic and ungrammatical, yet richly impressionistic, assonant and figurative: "Now you'd hear the thunder let go with an awful crash and then go rumbling, grumbling, tumbling down the sky towards the under side of the world, like rolling empty barrels down stairs, where it's long stairs and they bounce a good deal, you know." Nature in this book is recurrently stormy, dark and deadly. When the river floods and a frame house comes floating along, Jim sees a naked dead man inside who turns out to be Pap Finn. In his spiritual allegory, Huck does not know that by bonding with Jim, he has killed the evil represented in his heart by Pap. In contrast to Pap, Jim is protective of the boy, sensitive to his feelings like a good father: "Come in, Huck, but doan' look at his face—it's too gashly."

This chapter ends with a passage cataloging all the things they got from the wrecked house, whereas the more important point is the "spiritual gifts" represented by the replacement of Tom and Pap by Jim: "And so, take it all around, we made a good haul." In the spirit of Thoreau--simplify, simplify--Twain here parodies *Robinson Crusoe*, satirizing both Romanticism and the acquisitive materialism of most people, as Huck attributes great value to things useless to him: reticule, dog collar, horseshoe, vials of medicine with no labels on them, a wooden leg. In this scene, both he and Jim are appealing in their common humanity, both of them so caught up in the romantic spell of being self-reliant on a desert island, they even hunt around for a matching wooden leg. Much humor derives from the audience feeling more intelligent than the characters. In this book, however, that conceit is challenged by the evidence that the reader is probably inferior in character, virtue and spirit.

10

Jim doesn't want to talk to Huck about the dead man, giving as one reason that his ghost might come and haunt them. In a sense, Huck is haunted by the spirit of Pap insofar as he retains in his conditioned mind the belief that slavery is proper and that Jim is inferior. Jim's knowledge proves superior to Huck's when he warns the boy not to touch the snake skin. Influenced by Tom and disregarding his true Good Angel, Huck plays a prank on Jim that proves to be no harmless joke when Jim gets bit. Wanting to fool and scare Jim, he traps himself into a lie: "Then I slid out quiet and throwed the snakes clear away amongst the bushes; for I warn't going to let Jim find out it was all my fault, not if I could help it."

The snake is a sign of evil in Christian tradition and echoes the biblical story of Adam and Eve losing their innocence in the Garden. Like them, Huck acts out of pride, his conditioned feeling of superiority toward Jim. That racist feeling is the snake in this Garden. It traps him into betraying his friend, first with his prank and then again with his lie. This attitude continues into the fog episode. For now, all he learns is a literal lesson: Don't handle a snake skin.

11

To find out what is going on, Huck ventures ashore disguised as a girl, but the role is so unnatural to him he cannot even remember his fake name and keeps changing it, telling Mrs. Loftus lies from the stovepipe depth of his sunbonnet. She tells him the reward out for Jim is 300 dollars, the reward for Pap only 200. So it turns out that to society Pap is worth less than a slave. Even less than that now, bein' dead you see. The shrewd Mrs. Loftus sees through Huck's disguise and responds to his lies with the truth, that slave hunters will soon be landing on Jackson's Island. Though she offers to help him, he cannot trust her to help Jim, so he continues lying to her more ardently, feeling compelled to keep masking himself on land just as Jim had to do as a slave. When he gets back and alerts Jim, they escape quietly with all their belongings crowded onto the raft, a floating island that preserves for awhile longer the hope of finding a lasting "good place."

12

Jim builds a wigwam on the raft, another identification with Indians, as fellow outlaws closer to nature than whites--brutal, deadly nature. The raft is a pastoral sanctuary for the two innocents, floating through a

wilderness teeming with slave hunters and their dogs, a primal setting made even darker by contrast when they float past St. Louis “and it was like the whole world lit up.”

With that image the novel enlarges its context to include “the whole world,” then it contracts again to the story of Huck and Jim. Their common human traits--hunger and petty theft--are sympathetic because of their innocence otherwise, their circumstances and the limitation of their larceny to fruit and vegetables: “Pap said it warn’t no harm to borrow things if you was meaning to pay them back, sometime.” This example of Pap’s influence on Huck, less serious than racism, is satirized as comic rationalization for theft and for sacrificing only what they don’t want anyway. “Take it all around,” Huck says, using an holistic phrase, “we lived pretty high.” Their idyllic high is not merely personal happiness. As a fraternal bonding of white and black it is Utopian.

The peace of the Garden--the raft floating on the river--is disrupted by machines, first by the wreck of the Sir Walter Scott, then by the steamboat that overturns the raft. Coming upon the wreck, Huck “felt just the way any other boy would a felt.” He wants to climb aboard. Jim is more mature and he “was dead set against it, at first.” Huck cannot be stopped. He becomes Everykid, like the adolescent Tom Sawyer: “And wouldn’t he throw style into it?—wouldn’t he spread himself, nor nothing? Why, you’d think it was Christopher C’lumbus discovering Kingdom-Come. I wish Tom Sawyer was here.” This passage evokes the traditional ideal of America as a Heaven, the motif introduced by the placename St. Petersburg. Twain’s irony implies that Huck, not Tom, is the best exemplar for Americans.

Sir Walter Scott epitomized decadent Romanticism to Twain, who blamed the popular romances of Scott for inspiring the feudalism of aristocratic white southerners—“the Sir Walter disease.” Realism wrecked Romanticism just as the river wrecked the steamboat named after Sir Walter. Perhaps the pilot did not read the river well, or perhaps he got mugged at the helm while reading Sir Walter. Anyhow Huck gets himself trapped on board the wreck with a gang of murderers. His tom-foolery almost gets him killed and Jim captured. The absurdity of the gang members he overhears claiming to have “good morals” recalls the boys in Tom’s gang and reinforces the theme that adult society too is just another immature gang of robbers. Trapped on the Sir Walter, exposed to the consequences of foolish romanticism, Huck and Jim lose the raft, their realistic hope of freedom.

13

Huck’s urgency to escape the Sir Walter includes a calm thought that seems intended to suggest a comical contrast to the American Scott, as James Fenimore Cooper was often called. The remarkable feats performed by Cooper’s romantic hero Natty Bumppo included philosophizing in the midst of an attack or while riding at full gallop. By contrast, Huck appears to become a realist of few words: “It warn’t no time to be sentimentering.” Yet to some extent he proves to be a sentimentalist himself.

Escaping in a boat, while Jim rows for the raft Huck starts worrying about the murderers back there on the wreck, because “there ain’t no telling but I might come to be a murderer myself, yet, and then how would I like it?” He even persuades a watchman on a boat to go back upriver and help the murderers to escape, displaying more charity, empathy and adherence to the Golden Rule than any other Christian in the book--though it is sentimentering to try to save murderers, recalling the earlier satire of the liberal reformer Judge Thatcher. “I wished the widow knowed about it. I judged she would be proud of me for helping these rascalions, because rascalions and dead beats is the kind the widow and good people takes the most interest in.” Twain contrasts Huck’s good heart to the hypocrisy of Christians at the same time that once again as a Calvinistic realist he satirizes goodhearted foolishness.

When Huck realizes the murderers are probably dead after all, his compassion seems qualified by stoicism and by not taking “no stock in dead people”: “I felt a little bit heavy-hearted about the gang, but not much, for I reckoned if they could stand it, I could.”

14

Huck sees their experiences as exciting adventures, caring more about saving murderers than about saving Jim, until Jim tells him about how he suffered and feared for their lives. Huck decides Jim is right,

conceding the truth without conceding racial superiority: “He was most always right; he had an uncommon level head, for a nigger.” His perception of Jim has improved since Tom played a prank on him and Jim thought he got ridden all over the state by witches.

Nevertheless, Huck continues to act like Tom Sawyer by talking down to Jim, purporting to educate him, to teach him some history while making comical mistakes and citing the “best authorities.” Jim proves himself no Uncle Tom by challenging white authorities from the Widow Douglas to King Solomon and threatening to clobber anyone speaking French. Based on his limited experience, Jim rejects the idea of a harem on practical grounds, that it would be too noisy and quarrelsome. Then his common sense rebels against the King over the wisdom of chopping a baby in two. He disputes with the white boy at length, annoyed and even angered by inhumane white authority. His defense of children takes on a personal dimension in the context of his slavery and his worries about his own children: The white King has so many children (slaves) he “as soon chop a chile in two as a cat. Dey’s plenty mo’.”

When Huck tells Jim about the sad fate of the little “dolphin” of France, who lost his freedom, Jim sympathizes, even with a stranger far away in time and place: “Po’ little chap.” Throughout the story, Jim’s heartfelt concern for others contrasts with their cruelty to him. Huck goes on acting superior about the French language until Jim outsmarts him, traps him in his own analogy and trumps the white boy loudly with a punch line. Trying to preserve his attitude of superiority, Huck betrays himself with a lie, that he won the argument--based simply on his racial prejudice: “I see it warn’t no use wasting words--you can’t learn a nigger to argue.” In the next chapter, after the fog lifts, Huck’s sense of superiority is diminished when he is forced to acknowledge the truth of Jim’s humanity.

15

Huck gets separated from Jim in a fog, then he whoops for him until he gets tired. After awakening, he catches up to the raft and then, again imitating Tom Sawyer, he plays another cruel trick on Jim as he did with the snake on Jackson’s Island, persuading him the fog episode was just a dream. Jim trusts him until he reveals the joke, then tells him off and calls him “trash” for betraying and shaming a friend, after all Jim suffered thinking Huck must be dead. As an adult, Jim takes serious matters deeply to heart and asserts his dignity, shaming Huck, who is more mature hereafter.

The white boy feels compelled in his heart to acknowledge the humanity of the black man and his own unkindness, yet in his head he still thinks of Jim as inferior: “It was fifteen minutes before I could work myself up to go and humble myself to a nigger--but I done it... I didn’t do him no more mean tricks...” This “coming out of the fog,” though limited, is the most significant in the allegory of Huck’s moral development before his decision to go to hell for Jim. If overcoming racial prejudice was this difficult for a boy as goodhearted and adaptable as Huck, how much more difficult was it to change the hearts and minds of white adults?

16

As they float along watching out for Cairo, the eagerness of Jim to be free bothers Huck’s “conscience,” making clear through irony that (1) his conscience is his conditioning by society; (2) his good heart is a better moral guide; and yet (3), in his head, to the end, Huck is enslaved by convention and must keep running away.

The more Jim anticipates freedom, the more guilty Huck feels--first for helping a slave to escape and betraying Miss Watson, then for betraying Jim. By now he cares enough about Jim to pay attention to his priorities for the first time, “how the first thing he would do when he got to a free State he would go to saving up money and...buy his wife, which was owned on a farm close to where Miss Watson lived; and then they would both work to buy the two children, and if their master wouldn’t sell them, they’d get an Ab’litionist to go and steal them.”

By now Jim has been so humanized, even idealized, that a reader should be shocked when Huck twists around from loyal friend into a snake because Jim wants to steal his children out of slavery!—“children that belonged to a man I didn’t even know; a man that hadn’t ever done me no harm.” The reader knows the

children belong to Jim, who never did Huck any harm, a man that, sadly, Huck still doesn't even know. Huck favors a white stranger over his black friend: "It most froze me to hear such talk.... Thinks I, this is what comes of my not thinking." When he thinks, he thinks like Pap, Miss Watson and Tom. "I was sorry to hear Jim say that, it was such a lowering of him. My conscience got to stirring me up hotter than ever." As soon as Huck starts thinking, his racist conditioning rises up like the head of that snake he attracted that bit Jim. By lowering his esteem for Jim, Huck lowers our esteem for himself to its lowest point in the book. He ought to know better by now, but Twain is realistic.

Huck sets out to turn Jim in. But then, in response to Jim's effusions of trust and gratitude and praise, his heart prevails and he redeems himself to the reader by saving Jim with lies to passing slave hunters. Not scoundrel enough to betray his friend, he berates himself for lacking the courage to be one. As much as any other in the book, this episode reveals the power of racist conditioning with an icy clarity. Afterward, Huck rationalizes having followed his heart and commits himself thereafter to practicality, or situation ethics: "Always do whichever come handiest at the time." Soon after they realize they have floated past Cairo in the fog, missing their chance to go up the Ohio River to freedom. Then they lose their canoe. Huck attributes all this to his having touched the snakeskin back on Jackson's Island, sustaining the motif of his thoughtless disrespect for Jim, but he does not want to talk about it and remains unwilling to accept moral responsibility, blaming bad luck.

Along comes a steamboat and "aimed right for us." The steamboat is a mobile hotel representing the will of society, an urban machine in the Garden that smashes into the raft, separating white from black, punishing the outlaws and wrecking the "good place."

17

Once again, on land Huck lies and disguises himself. He meets young Buck Grangerford, "about as old as me--thirteen or fourteen." Chance comes fully into play as Buck resembles Huck and it seems only luck that Huck survives Buck. The feud between the Grangerfords and Shepherdsons alludes to the range wars going on over grassland in the western states at that time between cattle ranchers (rangers and forders) and homesteaders (shepherds) with sheep; it is also analogous to the many wars fought among aristocratic families in the history of Europe, except that Twain makes this feud absurd because no one remembers the reason for it.

In the Grangerford house, Huck enters "high culture" on the frontier of the 1840s. *Pilgrim's Progress*, the Christian allegory of pursuing salvation, was familiar to almost anyone who could read. Huck is a comparable pilgrim and is interested in the book because it is about somebody who left his family, "it didn't say why." Emmeline Grangerford's sentimental poetry exemplifies the obituary verse or "literature of misery" popular with women in the 19th century. Her ode is most hilarious when read aloud with predictable heavy pauses and sighs, in a monotone swooping high and plunging low and galloping when rhythm fails, accentuating the bathos and giving most emphasis to the anti-climax "O no." The poem is a parody of Julia A. Moore, who published a bestseller called *The Sentimental Song Book* (1876). One reviewer said, "Shakespeare, could he read it, would be glad that he is dead."

The "sentimentering" of Emmeline is another expression of decadent Romanticism--the "Sir Walter disease." Tom infected Huck to an extent dramatized repeatedly throughout the book, as evident in his admiration for the ode by Emmeline, who had a terminal case of the disease and apparently died of it. This chapter is a blend of pathos and hilarious parody, a complexity characteristic of the book as a whole. Huck feels so drawn to sentimental Emmeline he tries to "sweat out a verse" for her, but gives it up. Artifice is too unnatural to him. He is content just to be part of a family, well fed and comfortable in a good place: "Nothing couldn't be better." Huck's double negatives that make positives are parallel to Twain's double meanings through irony and allegory and his double tones such as pathos and humor. The chapter ends with Huck on a high that, according to the pattern of rise and fall throughout the book, will be followed by a fall--by Adam once again losing the Garden.

Twain opens by introducing the “aristocracy” on the frontier, as represented by Colonel Grangerford: “He was well born, as the saying is, and that’s worth as much in a man as it is in a horse.” That is, status as embodied in the aristocracy is not based on intelligence or morality, but merely on birth. Aristocracy is pretentious snobbery and Americans betray their best potential when they import the worst of Europe.

The Colonel “was as kind as he could be.” That ambiguous evaluation defines his limitations, as do his many slaves, one to each white person in the household, including guests. Jim is in hiding while Huck is attended by a slave. “There was another clan of aristocracy around there--five or six families--mostly by the name of Shepherdson. They was as high-toned, and well born, and rich and grand, as the tribe of Grangerfords.” Reducing the aristocrats to tribes reminds us that not too long ago their ancestors were tribes in animal skins trying to massacre each other, much as they are now. Twain depicts the feud as absurd, yet portrays the combatants on both sides as brave and gallant and tragically stupid.

Buck tells Huck about all the killings in the feud, keeping score. “Next Sunday we all went to church... The men took their guns along... It was pretty ornery preaching--all about brotherly love...” After church when Huck goes back to fetch a *Bible* with a love note in it for sweet Miss Sophia, serving as a bridge between the feuding families, “there warn’t anybody at the church, except maybe a hog or two... If you notice, most folks don’t go to church only when they’ve got to; but a hog is different.” The feuding men are ignoring their religion and behaving like hogs in a figurative sense, but a real hog is neither a murderer nor a hypocrite. That hogs are more virtuous than humans is an insult in the undertone, consistent with the explicit hellfire denunciation by Colonel Sherburn later.

When Huck is reunited with Jim, the man is more overjoyed than the boy: “He nearly cried, he was so glad.” Jim has retrieved and improved the raft and it becomes their sanctuary again after Huck witnesses an outburst of gunfire, boys shot and men trying to kill them: “It made me so sick I most fell out of the tree.” It is a tree of knowledge for the American Adam. When he does come down, he finds Buck dead. It seems only chance, the luck of birth, that Huck is not dead like Buck. Now, when he hears Jim call him back to the raft—“nothing ever sounded so good before.” Jim hugs him and Huck realizes his second death and rebirth: “They won’t find me, and they’ll think I’ve been killed.” After the horror, more than ever the raft becomes an ideal good place: “We said there warn’t no home like a raft, after all... You feel mighty free and easy and comfortable on a raft.” Now the raft is home and Jim is family.

Swimming at sunrise, Huck and Jim attain a purity of being that is possible while neither of them, apparently, is thinking. They have been floating along at peace for several days, “quiet and smooth and lovely.” Their transcendence of time and space through sensibility and sensations arises from pastoral seclusion and from literal and psychological immersion—“lazying around, listening to the stillness.” Yet even this most Edenic state is imperfect: “We was always naked, day and night, whenever the mosquitoes would let us.” Twain repeatedly counters “sentimentering” with Realism. When they are enveloped by a fog, this time they stay together. They hear disembodied voices “like spirits carrying on that way in the air. Jim said he believed it was spirits; but I says: No, spirits wouldn’t say, ‘dern the dern fog’.”

The equality of the two and their pastoral attitude is evident in their tolerance of disagreement, even about theology. Looking up at the stars, Jim is a creationist, whereas Huck thinks the stars just happened, but he easily concedes that Jim may be right, even his theory that the moon laid all the stars: “That looked kind of reasonable.” Their friendship contrasts with the feuding in the previous chapter: from horrible violence to blissful peace, another example of structuring with dualities in rhythmic alternation. The motif of affirming the untutored heart against the misguided head continues to the end of the book.

Huck finds a canoe they could use to row back up north into the Ohio River, but he is immediately beset by the sound of barking dogs coming his way, and men in hot pursuit. Here come the Duke and the King. The two frauds take over everything, just like real dukes and kings. Huck and Jim have no opportunity to use the canoe to escape. The Duke and the King are mock Europeans, intrusive anachronisms ridiculous on

the frontier or anywhere else. They are much like Pap Finn but outrageous to an even greater extreme--bad actors with pretensions to royalty. Like the Grangerfords and the Shepherdsons, they represent corrupt Old World institutions and values that militate against the American ideal of democratic equality. They embody what most disgusts Mark Twain, in farcical form.

Huck humors them in an effort to preserve the peace, for "what you want, above all things, on a raft, is for everybody to be satisfied, and feel right and kind towards the others." Jim has no choice. The raft is no longer the metaphor of an ideal society. Huck sees through the frauds but he tolerates them because he learned from Pap that "the best way to get along with his kind of people is to let them have their own way." But, Huck. Their way is slavery.

20

To save Jim from the frauds, Huck pretends to be his owner, turning the raft into a replica of the white society on land and ending the Utopian phase of the novel. The Pokeville camp-meeting is a satire of human gullibility, hypocrisy and the "sentimentering" of Christians who buy a "pig in a poke"--blindly believing a lie. They take up a collection to save fictitious pirates around the world in the Indian Ocean while accommodating slavery at home, acting like pirates themselves.

The concern of the Pokeville campers to save pirates far off in some romantic place echoes Huck's concern to save murderers on the Sir Walter Scott. The con by the King also echoes Pap's con of Judge Thatcher, with added delight when he gets mobbed by pretty girls and "some of them he hugged and kissed as many as five or six times." Twain here continues the theme of Melville that in the 19th century many "Christian" missionaries were frauds who exploited and stole from the natives. In this case, the natives who most need saving are the Pokeville campers.

The Duke writes and prints a "sweet and saddish" poem recalling Emmeline Grangerford, entitled, "Yes, crush, cold world, this breaking heart." To fake ownership of Jim in their cover story, the Duke prints a handbill offering a reward for Jim as a runaway and plans to tie him up: "We must preserve the unities, as we say on the boards." The unity implied here by juxtaposition is the unity of sentimental conventions--the stock responses conditioned by pop or Pap culture--and slavery.

21

The two frauds practice theatrics to dupe the public with fake Shakespeare as they duped the Pokeville campers with fake Christianity. The Duke recites his own version of the most familiar soliloquy in *Hamlet*, confusing it with lines from *Macbeth* that make it pompously ridiculous. The Duke strikes postures conventional in melodrama and school textbooks, faking emotions, oblivious to the meanings of the words, all performance and no substance. The setting for the scam, called Bricksville, appears to be modeled on Napoleon, Arkansas, perhaps the toughest frontier town on the Mississippi: "The hogs loafed and grunted around, everywhere." People here enjoy "putting turpentine on a stray dog and setting fire to him, or tying a tin pan to his tail and see him run himself to death."

Boggs is described by a bystander as "the best-natured old fool in Arkansas--never hurt nobody, drunk or sober." But when drunk, he turns into a stupid fool, like Pap. He rants and threatens and calls out Sherburn, expressing an intent to kill him. Sherburn gives an ultimatum to Boggs, who defies it "and give Sherburn another cussing." Sherburn shoots him twice. The sweet daughter of Boggs comes rushing and screaming, drawing the sympathy of readers inclined to sentimentering. Boggs struggles for his last breaths with a large *Bible* pressing down on his chest, expiring as if from its weight, or from the effects of its dogma. Sherburn is named as if by Christian standards he will surely burn in hell. Nevertheless, according to him, this is the frontier, not Christian society. Standards get established here by force and courage prevails. The townspeople prove him right by turning into a lynch mob.

22

Sherburn is proven right again in declaring to the craven mob, "The average man's a coward." His denunciation of lynchers, who usually lynched black people in the South, is an eruption of the outrage that

has gathered and risen closer to the surface of the narrative the more Jim is humanized and the more that Huck witnesses human nature. Since Huck is too innocent, tolerant and conditioned to understand or feel the outrage, Twain vents it through Sherburn, who shames the mob, turns the lynching into a circus with himself as ringmaster and drives the cowards away into the dark.

Huck then goes to an actual circus, where he is fooled by a performer pretending to be drunk, then fooled again into thinking the ringmaster was fooled, repeatedly falling for conventional routines as he does when under the influence of Tom Sawyer: "Well, I felt sheepish enough, to be took in so." To the end of the book, he still does not understand the way the world has fooled him, no more than he understands what is fake in the mangled Shakespeare perpetrated by the frauds.

23

The Duke and the King stoop as low as naked on all fours to scam their audiences. Huck stoops to lying to Jim again about kings and mixing up Henry VIII with American history, acting superior again like Tom and the Grangerfords and Shepherdsons. The vulgarity, pretense and fraud displayed by the white performers set up the most extreme and poignant contrast of tones in the novel.

On the raft Jim keeps watch during Huck's turn, as he often does, like a parent looking out for him. This night he is mourning over his children, fearing that he may never see them again. By now Huck has become aware enough of Jim that he begins to understand his misery: "He was thinking about his wife and his children, away up yonder, and he was low and homesick...and I do believe he cared just as much for his people as white folks does for their'n. It don't seem natural, but I reckon it's so." This is a breakthrough: Huck's mind has been changed to the extent of recognizing an equal humanity in Jim, yet even after Jim's deeply moving confession which follows, Huck's social conditioning remains too strong, due largely to his own low self-esteem, for him to overthrow the hierarchy of society that places Tom (head) at the top, himself inferior to Tom (heart), and Jim (soul) at the bottom, enslaved.

The confession of Jim, that once he misunderstood his little daughter and treated her unfairly, is arguably the most humanizing and moving speech in American literature. This speech alone refutes all the critics who have complained that Jim is not portrayed as sufficiently mature or fully human. His confession is evidence that Jim is the most deeply sympathetic character and the only noble one in the book. He is completely openhearted, honest, parental, conscientious and loving as he confesses to an understandable mistake. He feels so ashamed and miserable he weeps. His good character and authentic emotions contrast with all the conventional sentimentering, fakery and posturing by those who demean and enslave him. This scene measures the humanity of the reader, and the critic. Whosoever is not moved to sympathy for poor Jim in this scene must be heartless.

24

The climax of Jim's confession, the high peak of sympathy for him, is followed immediately in the next chapter by the most degrading treatment of him in the book, juxtaposing extremes in order to intensify the outrage of the reader. It is disappointing, but realistic, that Huck goes along with the Duke and the King in abusing Jim by keeping him tied up all day: "When we left him all alone we had to tie him, because if anybody happened on him all by himself and not tied, it wouldn't look much like he was a runaway nigger, you know." The absurd illogic conceals the motive of keeping Jim tied up because he is worth money. When Jim is freed from bondage, he is still threatened with betrayal and his emancipation is humiliating. This is Twain's metaphor of black history.

Huck betrays Jim and himself, acting against the current of his moral development, by going along with the Duke and the King, just he does with Tom at the end. The frauds dress up Jim as King Lear, who was so innocent of human nature, so generous and naive, he was betrayed by those closest to him and lost everything. Jim loses everything too. He is deprived of humanity, dignity and life itself, as they paint him blue like a dead man drowned in the river. A warning sign beside him declares that he is sick, perhaps contagious--an untouchable--but harmless, when not *insane!* Calling him an Arab, recalling Tom's adolescent fantasy, pushes Jim even further away, casting him into an alien culture on the other side of the

world: "Blamed if he warn't the horriblemest looking outrage I ever see." Huck reacts as if he is still watching the circus. He does not feel true outrage. Fooled again, he thinks "Jim was satisfied." This episode is comparable to Huck's tolerance of Tom when he prolongs Jim's misery at the end of the book.

The scope of villainy enlarges when the Duke and the King set out to defraud the Wilks girls with a "deaf and dumb" act, a fraudulent appeal for sympathy all the more outrageous because it recalls in contrast the real disability of Jim's little daughter Lizabeth. Finally, in the Wilks episode, Huck reaches the limit of his tolerance of the two frauds: "It was enough to make a body ashamed of the human race."

25-30

The Wilks girls would prefer to live in aristocratic England. Their episode is a parody of traditional romance dating from the Middle Ages--in the tradition of *Don Quixote* (1605), the book Tom Sawyer cited as an authority without understanding that it is a satire (Chapter 3). To this day, many Americans remain enchanted by royalty and some girls still dream of becoming another Grace Kelly and marrying a prince: Mary Jane Wilks "flung herself onto the king's breast at the front door and he kissed her sixteen or seventeen times." Having satirized aristocracy in the Grangerford episode and as embodied in the King and the Duke, Twain now ridicules the aristocratic literary genre that spread the "Sir Walter Scott disease." Repeatedly the King refers to the dead man in the coffin as the "diseased."

Aided by the Duke, the King steals the inheritance of the girls by duping them and exploiting their naive romanticism, evoking the history of Europe. Though cast as victims, these southern girls are part of a feudal order, as their slaves are equivalent to medieval serfs. In Twain's parody, the fair damsels are captivated by the King. Huck becomes the unlikely barefoot hero, a low class American boy who outdoes the knights of old Europe (1) by saving not one, not two, but *three!* fair damsels in jeopardy, and (2) by using his wits rather than force to prevail. Huck's realism derives from his experience. He is young America emancipating itself from domination by old Europe, which is by now an obvious farce embodied in the King and the Duke--and in Tom Sawyer. Twain makes the girls orphans, a convention among Victorians that increases their vulnerability and pathos.

Within the context of his parody, Twain vents his contempt for the sentimentality motivating Romance and for the manners that enforce Romantic values and vision. The Duke is such an obvious fraud at playing deaf and dumb, he makes the townspeople look deaf and dumb. The absurd exaggerations are a measure of disdain: "I never see two men leak the way they done. And mind you, everybody was doing the same; and the place was that damp I never see anything like it... Everybody broke down and went to sobbing right out loud--the poor girls, too...with the tears running down, and then busted out and went off sobbing and swabbing, and give the next woman a show. I never see anything so disgusting. Well, by-and-by the king he gets up and comes forward a little, and works himself up and slobbers out a speech, all full of tears and flapdoodle...all that kind of rot and slush, till it was just sickening; and then he blubbers out a pious goody-goody Amen, and turns himself loose and goes to crying fit to bust...all that soul-butter and hogwash" (Chapter 25). This display is Emmeline Grangerford's sensibility expressed in an orgy of mob emotion--including "funeral orgies" conducted by the King ("We say orgies now in England")--that recalls the dupes at the Pokeville camp meeting. At least in this episode, feeling genuine sympathy for the girls, Huck is not fooled.

Henry James believed that manners should be the outward sign of spiritual grace, but that too often manners were merely deceptive form. Twain was a Victorian gentleman around his wife--she loved him for his chivalry--but the Huck in him felt manners were mostly nonsense. In addition, as a Calvinistic moralist he had a much lower threshold of tolerance for artifice and pretense than James, for manners as a social mask worn by everybody to conceal true feelings and motives. Huck lacks manners but has a good heart, common sense and the ability to adapt, to read the river of life--the ability, when necessary, to lie like a politician. Twain was more Calvinistic than Hawthorne. Increasingly during his life, he saw manners as mostly a front for fraud, especially in Washington D.C. The antithesis of manners is evil Pap of course, but also the brutal truth-teller Sherburn.

At the end of Chapter 25, the doctor exposes the frauds but the townspeople are too deaf and dumb to believe him, so the King prevails: “Cuss the doctor!... Hain’t we got all the fools in town on our side?” In the next chapter Twain ridicules table manners in the context of slavery, implying that both institutions--from dining room to cotton field--are based on lies: “all that kind of humbug talky-talk.” Confessing to Mary Jane, Huck says, “I reckon a body that ups and tells the truth...is taking considerable many resks, though I ain’t had no experience [!], and can’t say for certain; but it looks so to me, anyway; and yet here’s a case where I’m blest if it don’t look to me like the truth is better, and actually *safer*, than a lie. I must lay it by in my mind, and think it over some time or other, it’s so kind of strange and unregular.”

Huck sacrifices the opportunity to run off with Mary Jane to safety and comfort--a true family at last--because he realizes that he must continue submitting to the King and the Duke until he can save Jim. When the rival claimants arrive and the King is forced to guess what tattoo the buried man has on his chest, he is compared to a “bluff bank that the river has cut under,” a simile that identifies the river with truth, the natural place where Huck and Jim were able to be themselves until the King and the Duke arrived and took over the raft.

31

The King and the Duke embody what Twain most detests in human beings: aristocratic pretension, racism, fraud and greed. Huck and Jim agree to “clear out and leave them behind.” When he returns from the village and discovers that Jim is gone, Huck is more distressed than he was after the steamboat overturned the raft and he thought Jim drowned: He runs around searching the woods and “whooping and screeching; but it warn’t no use--old Jim was gone. Then I sat down and cried.”

He learns that Jim has been sold down the river by the King “for forty dollars.” At the end of the story, likewise, “Tom give Jim forty dollars for being prisoner for us so patient”--identifying Tom with the King and the government. The repeated forty dollars refers to the famous promise made to emancipated slaves by the government, and never kept--“forty acres and a mule.” Legal “emancipation” implied equality but amounted to being “sold down the river”: In the end, as we see, though Jim is legally free, he remains a “nigger”--even to Huck!

By now Huck has clearly developed enough to empathize with Jim: “After all this long journey, and after all we’d done for them scoundrels, here was it all come to nothing...because they could have the heart to serve Jim such a trick as that, and make him a slave again all his life, and amongst strangers, too, for forty dirty dollars.” Yet in the very next paragraph Huck shifts from his heart to his head, from empathy for Jim to thinking of himself: “And then think of *me!* It would get all around, that Huck Finn helped a nigger to get his freedom.” He identifies his “conscience” with appearances and social status: “It ain’t no disgrace” if “he can hide it.” His religious upbringing by Miss Watson and the influence of Pap and the white community have conditioned him to believe that slavery was ordered by God and therefore to help a slave escape was a sin.

This mental set generates the primary ironic theme sustained throughout the story, which reaches a climax in this chapter: “I was stealing a poor old woman’s nigger that hadn’t ever done me no harm, and now was showing me there’s One that’s always on the lookout, and ain’t agoing to allow no such miserable doings to go only just so fur and no further.” The bifurcation of consciousness required for a Christian to accommodate slavery is expressed in Huck’s flips of perspective: Using his conditioned head now rather than his natural heart, he adopts the politically correct racist view, dissociates from his heart and disregards that Jim has done him less harm than Miss Watson, that he has in fact done him much good and that he has suffered, is suffering and will suffer far more than Miss Watson ever will. Social conditioning is so powerful, according to Twain, that later he wrote *Puddn’head Wilson* (1891) in order to emphasize that again more absolutely. Ironically, the One who is “always on the lookout, and ain’t agoing to allow no such miserable doings to go only just so fur and no further” is Huck himself--as with the Wilks girls and with Jim. As Twain implies at the end of Chapter 3, Huck will get no help from a genie nor from the God of Miss Watson--he must rely on himself.

The power of this pivotal scene in Chapter 31 is intensified by the length of Huck's interior monologue of almost three pages, his clear moral conflict, his obvious mistake in believing slavery is ordered by God, the increasing frustration of the reader that he does not understand this, the suspense, the pathos, the irony and the humor. The only scene in American literature that approaches this one for the extremity and density of ironic effects is the scaffold scene where Reverend Dimmesdale urges Hester to reveal the father of her child. Here too, ironies are generated by hypocrisy and, as seen by the authors, by misconceptions of God. Huck realizes "I was playing double," but he thinks "my heart warn't right." On the contrary, his heart will save both him and Jim.

After Huck writes a note to Miss Watson betraying Jim, "I felt good and all washed clean of sin for the first time I had ever felt so in my life." The irony is as sharp as a nail through the hand: Christian education perverted by racism makes him a Judas and Jim a Jesus. Fortunately, before sending off the note, he "set there thinking--thinking... And went on thinking. And got to thinking over our trip down the river." Actually he is not *thinking*, but feeling and envisioning—remembering and finally appreciating all that Jim has done for him, feeling grateful and loyal. His heart--his good nature--prevails: "'All right, then, I'll go to hell'--and tore it up."

Before his journey down river with Jim, he wanted to go to "the good place" with Tom Sawyer. Now he is willing to go to hell for Jim: "As long as I was in, and in for good, I might as well go the whole hog." He is "in for good" in the sense that, ironically, by traditional Christian standards, his conduct has made him the most self-sacrificial, most Christian white person in the book, and the most deserving of "the good place." Choosing Jim the Christ figure over devilish Tom is unconscious redemption from the racist society and from Pap, the devil in him who is dead, though Huck does not know that, consistent with his ignorance of his own divided psyche. The hog reference recalls the scene in the Grangerford episode when Huck finds hogs in the church, but no true Christians.

32

Hemingway, with Neoclassical rather than picaresque aesthetics, considered the rest of the story an anticlimax. Though active in history, Hemingway strove to transcend time and place in his art. *Huckleberry Finn* is likewise transcendent, but it is also an historical allegory. To end the book here would imply that (1) Huck will succeed in freeing Jim in a simple happy ending; and (2) Huck is fully redeemed, whereas in fact he is still divided against himself. In the moral allegory of his individuation, he still thinks of Jim as a "nigger." He is still in bondage to Tom and he still thinks slavery is ordered by God.

The rest of the book is required to complete the historical allegory and to fully reveal the extent of Huck's development. It has often been argued that the rest is unnecessarily long, but the length too can be defended: The episode of Jim's incarceration at the Phelps place is prolonged as the "objective correlative" for the impatience, exasperation and disgust Twain wants the reader to feel toward Tom Sawyer, who dominates the situation and in the allegory embodies the adolescent romanticism of adult whites before the Civil War, who subjugated slaves based on notions of racial superiority that arrested their development. Twain's tone is justified because satire, burlesque and farce are appropriate to Tom's lightheartedly superior attitude and foolishness. The novel is set in 1839 or the 1840s. Slaves would not be emancipated for almost a quarter century. *Enough!* Twain ends his historical allegory true to conditions at the time while also prefiguring the future known to the reader.

"Phelps's was one of those little one-horse cotton plantations; they all look alike." It is representative, a metaphor of the South. As the chapter opens, Huck is lonesome and depressed again: "I wished I was dead." Yet he still has faith in himself: "I'd noticed that Providence always did put the right words in my mouth, if I left it alone." Of course, the one putting the right words in his mouth is Mark Twain. Huck is depressed again because he has failed to free Jim. In the allegory of his moral development Jim represents his soul, who is once again in shackles. The overtone of the narrative becomes predominantly farcical when Tom Sawyer arrives, but Twain has mixed contrasting tones all along, and there is a continuing undertone of pathos because Jim's freedom and Huck's soul are still at stake: "When I got there it was all still and Sunday-like."

On land, once again both Huck and Jim--heart and soul--are subjugated. Huck must conform to society again, in the form of well-meaning Aunt Sally, who mistakes him for Tom Sawyer. The coincidence that Huck should arrive at the very time Tom is expected is one of the "stretchers" he acknowledges at the outset of his story. He plays the role assigned to him and tells Aunt Sally he got delayed because his steamboat blew out a cylinder-head:

"Good gracious! anybody hurt?"

"No'm. Killed a nigger."

"Well, it's lucky; because sometimes people do get hurt."

There is a comparable dehumanization of a different race in the *Journal* of John Winthrop (5 July 1643), describing a wind gust: "It darkened the air with dust, yet through God's great mercy it did no hurt, but only killed one Indian with the fall of a tree." Aunt Sally then alludes to a steamboat named after a romantic poem that wrecked and crippled a man who eventually died of "mortification." This wreck, like the earlier wreck of the *Sir Walter Scott*, implies again that popular romanticism--including racism--is dangerous and crippling.

Huck does not realize that the Tom he has been mistaken for is none other than Tom Sawyer, until Aunt Sally introduces him to Uncle Silas: "By jings, I most slumped through the floor... But if they was joyful, it warn't nothing to what I was; for it was like being born again, I was so glad to find out who I was." Actually, of course, Huck does not yet know who he is well enough to get his heart and head together. Confused, divided, lonely and longing for a family, he conforms to be accepted. Ironically, conformity and acceptance make him feel "born again"--socially saved by contradicting his own nature and becoming his moral opposite: "Being Tom Sawyer was easy and comfortable."

33

As soon as Tom arrives, he takes over again. Huck is shocked when Tom wants to help him steal Jim out of slavery, not knowing that Tom is only doing so because he knows Miss Watson has died and already set Jim free in her will. Tom is so self-indulgently cruel he conceals this fact from both Huck and Jim. "I'm bound to say Tom Sawyer fell, considerable, in my estimation. Only I couldn't believe it. Tom Sawyer a *nigger stealer!*" At the end of the chapter, Huck sees the King and the Duke tarred and feathered and being carried out of town on a rail: "Well, it made me sick to see it; and I was sorry for them poor pitiful rascals... It was a dreadful thing to see. Human beings *can* be awful cruel to one another." That is the Victorian moral of the story. Huck's sympathetic heart finally rebels against his "conscience," saying it "ain't got no sense." It appears he is beginning to understand himself, but then, still confused, he ends the chapter by agreeing with Tom. Twain implies that the problem with "conscience" in this society is not so much that it has no sense, but that it has no heart.

34

Jim is so miserable enslaved again that he says, like Huck earlier, "I wisht I was dead." Huck the realist has a plan to free Jim that is simple, direct, immediate and likely to work. Tom the selfish romantic insists on doing it his way. That is, he keeps Jim enslaved, knowing he should be free. Huck is only about 14, remember, with an inferiority complex, and he is still--with ongoing irony--idealizing Tom as a model, which accounts for his astonishment that Tom has become a "nigger stealer": "Here was this boy that was respectable, and well brung up; and had a character to lose...and he was bright and not leather-headed; and knowing and not ignorant; and not mean, but kind... *I couldn't* understand it, no way at all." Huck does not see how *unkind* and selfishly cruel it is of Tom to prolong Jim's misery with his ridiculous plans.

35

As Tom proceeds with his plan, he becomes an adolescent Don Quixote to Huck's Sancho Panza: "Well, if that ain't just like you, Huck Finn. You *can* get up the infant-schooliest ways of going at a thing. Why, hain't you ever read any books at all?" Tom then refers to romantic adventurers, confusing their exploits, demonstrating that he is not one of "the best authorities," but one of the worst--which becomes increasingly

obvious as he considers sawing Jim's leg off, since "some of the best authorities has done it... It's the custom in Europe." Then he wants Jim to write a journal in his own blood and to dig the foundations from under the cabin where Jim is being held, imitating the romantic hero of *The Count of Monte Cristo* (1844). Every time Huck speaks for the reader by talking sense, Tom insults him. Ironically, he accuses Huck of irrelevance: "You're always a-wandering off on a side issue. Why can't you stick to the main point?" Tom's main point, his only point, is fun for himself.

36

Tom equates his selfishness with morality and Huck goes along with him because Tom was "full of principle." When Tom attempts but fails to enter the house by climbing up the lightning rod, Huck suggests, "'Come up the stairs and let on it's a lightning rod.' So he done it." The boys visit Jim and the pathos of his predicament contrasts with the infuriating indifference of Tom. Huck finally rebels against Tom's stupid ideas to a limited extent, telling Jim: "'Don't do nothing of the kind; it's one of the most jackass ideas I ever struck'; but he never paid no attention to me; went right on. It was his way when he'd got his plans set."

Huck and Jim fear that the unpredictable and self-indulgent Tom might expose their plan and doom Jim's chance for freedom. Jim naturally thinks he has no choice but to be realistic and submit to Tom: his hope of reunion with his wife and children is at stake. Huck misinterprets this behavior as evidence that Jim is satisfied and accepts his status as a "nigger": "Jim he couldn't see no sense in the most of it, but he allowed we was white folks and knowed better than him; so he was satisfied, and said he would do it all just as Tom said." Critics who accuse Jim of behaving like an "Uncle Tom" in this scene fail to appreciate the pressures on a slave in Jim's situation, at the mercy of cruel, whimsical and racist whites. Worst of all, though clearly brave and repeatedly defiant when it is not foolish to be so, Jim truly feels inferior to whites because of his conditioning and lack of education, which Tom exploits.

At this point, Twain makes his historical allegory almost explicit: "Tom was in high spirits. He said it was the best fun he ever had in his life, and the most intellectual; and said if he only could see his way to it we would keep it up all the rest of our lives and leave Jim to our children to get out; for he believed Jim would come to like it better and better the more he got used to it. He said in that way it could be strung out to as much as eighty year, and would be the best time on record. And he said it would make us all celebrated that we had a hand in it." This is obviously absurd, especially in a literal sense, since Jim is older than they are and probably will not survive them. Jim is not a human being here, but a symbol of his race, which is how Tom treats him. This passage summarizes the disgraceful history of slavery in America up to the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863. Twain is heaping bitter scorn on those whites who rationalized prolonging tolerance of slavery, including many Christians such as Hawthorne, who, fearing a Civil War that would divide the "Sacred Union," believed that slavery would gradually disappear according to the divine plan of God.

37

Tom exploits Jim's superstitions and terrors, pretending to be helpful in order to keep him in bondage, as by telling him he will make him a witch pie to fend off the witches all around. The happy family scene at the Phelps breakfast table with humorous little events such as the flying corn crust, is comparable to those in Dickens. But it also calls attention to the insensitivity of the white family while Jim cringes outside in terror, fearing he may never see *his* family again.

38-39

Tom's boyish pranks on Jim early in the novel seemed relatively harmless. By now, however, the reader knows Jim. By now we should be identifying so much with him, as he wraps a chain around his own neck, that Tom's tomfoolery has become outrageous: A naive animal lover, he wants Jim to "tame" a rattlesnake: "Every animal is grateful for kindness and petting, and they wouldn't *think* of hurting a person that pets them. Any book will tell you that." Jim has already gotten bit by a rattlesnake back on Jackson's Island. He is wiser than the system enslaving him, represented by Tom. Consequently he refuses to tolerate this

particular nonsense, threatening that if Tom brings snakes into the cabin, he will simply leave. In this episode, Tom is the real snake: "Tom most lost all patience with him."

Critics who have complained about the overtone of this last long episode, claiming that the burlesque and farce debase Jim, have identified themselves with Tom Sawyer, ironically, by attributing all the literary significance to the satire directed at him. No surprise. In Twain's view, professors are much like Tom, always citing "the best authorities" and living their lives out of books. If professors identified with Jim, as they should by now, they would appreciate the tragedy and pathos of his predicament that is the undertone of the episode, the human depth that makes the white characters seem inhumanely trivial and shallow. When the gothic horror of Jim's predicament is appreciated, what takes place in the Phelps house becomes a parody of popular domestic sentimentality.

40

As expected, Tom's plan fails. When he gets shot in the leg and bleeds, Jim helps to stop the bleeding, though Tom never cared about how much Jim was bleeding inside. In refusing to leave Tom until a doctor arrives, then sacrificing his freedom to help the doctor save Tom, Jim is now most clearly a black Christ. All the characters are measured in moral relation to him. Huck validates him now: "I knowed he was white inside." Ironically, this racist praise actually represents progress. Huck used to see Jim as subhuman, feeling it was unnatural for him to have the same feelings for his family as a white man.

41

Huck explains to the doctor how Tom got injured: "'He had a dream,' I says, 'and it shot him'." The dream is Tom's romanticizing that culminated in real harm, a metaphor pointing ahead to the Civil War. Old Mrs. Hotchkiss thinks "the nigger was crazy" to run away, and she concludes those who stole him were so slick, they must have been "spirits." Tom, Huck and Jim are all "spirits," or spiritual personifications in the moral and historical allegories. Aunt Sally offers the family that Huck has longed for all along, but she also represents the society that enslaves both him and Jim. She is hard to resist when he wants to run off and get back to Tom. She "mothered me so good I felt mean, and like I couldn't look her in the face." Unlike Miss Watson and the Widow Douglas, who are *puritan*, Aunt Sally is *pastoral*. After she loves him up and trusts him, "Laws knows I *wanted* to go, bad enough...and was all intending to go; but after that, I wouldn't a went, not for kingdoms." Twain affirms Aunt Sally for her good heart despite her part in the slavery system, and agrees with the philosopher Spinoza, who said, "Minds are not conquered by force, but by love, and high-mindedness."

42

Disguised in a dress belonging to Aunt Sally, Jim is humiliated again. Men gather around, some wanting to hang him for "making such a *raft* of trouble." Jim endures abuse like Christ carrying the cross: "They cussed Jim considerable...and give him a cuff or two, side of the head, once in awhile, but Jim never said nothing, and he never let on to know me." The doctor says, "He ain't a bad nigger," and tells them how Jim gave up his freedom to help save Tom. "So every one of them promised, right out and hearty, that they wouldn't cuss him no more." Then they lock him up back in the cabin again. They keep him "on bread and water, and loaded down with chains, till he's claimed or sold!"

Jim is only freed from physical bondage when Tom reveals, finally, after having his great adventure, that Miss Watson set him free in her will. Huck finally understands how Tom could help "set a nigger free, with his bringing up." He does not fault Tom for torturing Jim for so long because, though in his heart he loves Jim, in his head he still thinks of Jim as a "nigger" and slavery as ordered by God. Miss Watson only set Jim free when he could be of no further use to her. Besides, he had run away and would do so again. Spiritually, she could never really own him in the first place. In that sense, they all "set a free nigger free."

CHAPTER THE LAST

The absurdly prolonged emancipation of Jim, a metaphor of the American history of slavery up to the Emancipation in 1863, is called "the evasion." Tom tells Huck he planned to go on evading the emancipation of Jim until he got through having "adventures" at his expense. Then he would "take him

back up home on a steamboat, in style, and pay him for his lost time.” They would have a parade with a brass band “and then he would be a hero, and so would we.”

Tom is out of touch with reality, as Huck knows. Twain is generous toward Aunt Polly, Aunt Sally and Uncle Silas, who are redeemed by their good treatment of Jim after they hear about how he sacrificed himself to help Tom. When he gives Jim “forty dollars for being prisoner for us so patient,” Tom recalls the U.S. government, which did not fulfill its promise to give emancipated slaves forty acres and a mule. Forty dollars is pitiful. Poor Jim is still too innocent, trusting and incapacitated by slavery to realize that, far from making him rich, forty dollars is not enough to buy his wife and children. Furthermore, the novel has implied that on his own he is likely to be captured and resold into slavery again himself. Jim thinks he is rich in money, whereas instead he is the richest in spirit of any character in the book. Ironically, the two best characters in *Huckleberry Finn* both have crippling inferiority complexes that keep them in mental bondage despite their physical freedom.

Like Hawthorne before him, Twain also uses money to symbolize a spiritual reward, the six thousand dollars plus interest that Judge Thatcher has held for Huck, accessible now that Pap is dead. Huck can never be a racist again in his heart. In the moral allegory it is Jim, the soul/Christ, who tells Huck that his Pap, the Devil of racism, is gone: “He ain’t a comin’ back no mo’, Huck.” To the end, Jim protects the boy from knowledge of how his Pap died, consistent with Huck’s lack of self-knowledge. Huck has yet to outgrow the racist conditioning of his head, but that applies only in a society based on slavery. “I reckon I got to light out for the Territory ahead of the rest, because Aunt Sally she’s going to adopt me and sivilize me and I can’t stand it. I been there before.”

Huck sacrifices the opportunity to be part of a family, what he has longed for all along, choosing instead to be lonely rather than be untrue to himself, refusing to disguise himself anymore. Like Ishmael at the end of his voyage, Huck is an orphan. He chooses independence and rejects slavery “ahead of the rest” of white society. In archetypal terms, he is continuing his individuation from the crude frontier “City” through a pastoral Garden and into the real Wilderness of the West--prefigured by the wigwam on the raft. On the raft Huck learned how to transcend time and civilization. In contrast, Tom is identified with a watch, a traditional symbol of civilization. Tom remains behind “always seeing what time it is,” with his bullet around his neck on a watch-guard--like what might be worn by an Indian, implying that this white “civilization” is in its way as primitive as Indian Territory.

The final illustration in the original edition of the novel is called “Out of Bondage”: It shows Jim standing between Tom and Huck with a hand on a shoulder of each, all three of them smiling. This is consistent with the ironic tone sustained throughout the book, since it implies a happy ending. On the contrary, Jim will soon be disappointed again, Emancipation is almost a quarter century away, and Huck has given up his dream of joining a family and chosen to be lonely. The illustration also implies that Tom and Jim are equals, in fact that all three are, which is untrue in almost every way. Jim is still a “nigger” to both the boys and none of the three is free. Huck is the most free, but he is still in mental bondage like Jim. Tom is likewise a prisoner of his conditioning and his watch is ticking toward the Civil War.

Michael Hollister (2015)